



**C-AGG**

Coalition on Agricultural Greenhouse Gases

**USDA AAQTF MEETING**

**FORT COLLINS, CO**

**DECEMBER 5, 2014**

**DEBBIE REED, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, C-AGG**

## What is C-AGG?

**C-AGG** is a multi-stakeholder coalition fostering agreement and action to develop effective and mutually beneficial (to the agricultural sector and society) voluntary incentives to reduce GHG emissions and enhance ecosystem benefits from the agricultural sector.



## C-AGG's focus:



Advancing the development and adoption of science-based *policies, methodologies, protocols, projects, tools, and decision support systems* for GHG emissions reductions and carbon sequestration within the agricultural sector.



## Key Issue:

Agricultural ecosystems are managed biological systems that require flexible, cost-effective approaches that foster innovation to reduce GHG emissions and enhance ancillary environmental benefits.



# How Does C-AGG Operate?

- ▶ **COLLABORATION!**
- ▶ **CONVENING!**
- ▶ **Open tent policy:** constructive engagement and support for our goals are only prerequisites
- ▶ C-AGG 2-day meetings 3 times per year:
  - ▶ March: Sacramento
  - ▶ July: Mid-Central U.S.
  - ▶ November: Washington, DC
- ▶ C-AGG workshops intermittently: deep dives
- ▶ Participant email list to share relevant reports, documents, activities, meeting alerts, white papers
- ▶ [www.c-agg.org](http://www.c-agg.org)

## **C-AGG Executive Team:**

- ▶ **Debbie Reed, C-AGG Executive Director**
- ▶ **C-AGG Team:**
  - ▶ **C-AGG Project Manager: Monica (Skeldon) McBride**
  - ▶ **C-AGG Program Coordinator: Ashley Markgraf**
  - ▶ **Facilitator: Chris Chopyak, Alchemy Consulting**
  - ▶ **Strategic Illustrator: Alece Birnbach, Alchemy Consulting**



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## **C-AGG Steering Committee:**

- ▶ **Paul Buttner, CRC**
- ▶ **Michael Formica, NPPC**
- ▶ **(Laura Wood Peterson, NACD)**
- ▶ **David Miller, IFBF**
- ▶ **Robert Parkhurst, EDF**
- ▶ **Jimmy Daukas, AFT**
- ▶ **Leslie Durschinger, TGC**
- ▶ **Ricardo Bayon, EAMP**
- ▶ **Rich Conant, CSU**
- ▶ **John Kadyszewski, WI**



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- **C-AGG Activities and Future Goals:**
  - Continued focus on Collaboration with our Stakeholders
    - ✓ Continued Dialogue, Partnerships with USDA
    - ✓ Convening future GHG CIGs?
    - ✓ EPRI OH River Basin WQT Initiative: Credit Stacking
  - Ecosystem Service Markets, Sustainable Supply Chain Initiatives as Drivers for Incentive-based Opportunities for Agricultural GHG Mitigation and Ecosystem Service (*Sustainability*) Opportunities
    - ✓ C-AGG has joined Field-to-Market Alliance for Sustainable Agriculture
  - Continued focus on decision support systems, tools and technologies to support our goals
  - Sharing our “Shared Learnings” – Sustainability at Scale

## How does C-AGG Define Sustainability?



- **Triple-bottom line:**
  - ❖ Profit (economics)
  - ❖ People (producers, all)
  - ❖ Planet (environment)
  
- **For agriculture:**
  - ❖ Economically viable, efficient
  - ❖ Adaptable, flexible, innovative, beneficial, scientifically-based
  - ❖ Measurable beneficial environmental impacts

C-AGG: what are the big issues for USDA to consider w/r/t agricultural sustainability?

- ▶ Infrastructure
- ▶ Data
- ▶ Resources
- ▶ Engagement
- ▶ Impacts
- ▶ Value



*Note: not mutually exclusive*

## USDA and Agricultural Sustainability: **Infrastructure Issues**



- ▶ Infrastructure:  
programmatic investments
- ❖ Tools: models, calculators
  - Harmonized, standardized
  - Reduce duplication,  
redundant input needs
  - User-friendly interfaces
- ❖ Decision support systems
  - Clarity: what is/are desired  
impact(s)? Specifics!
  - Risks and benefits: tradeoffs
    - ✓ Economics, other impacts
  - Flexible, science-based
  - Whole-farm approaches

## USDA and Agricultural Sustainability: **Data Issues**



- ▶ Data: Ag is data-driven, these tools & opportunities are data driven, & data intensive
  - ❖ Access to federal data
    - Aggregated, auto-integrated into tools
      - ✓ Reduce duplication, redundant input needs
    - Baseline creation in particular, for all important metrics, by geographic region, is needed
    - Research data for model cal/val
    - Strategic Rethink?
  - ❖ Metrics
    - Intensity-based
    - New climate metrics to mirror new science

USDA and  
agricultural  
sustainability:  
**Resource Issues**



▶ Resources

- ❖ Educational & resource materials & support systems for ag sector critical
  - Semantics important: address ag pain/pressure points, e.g. Inputs, efficiency, costs
  - Business case: economics, risks and returns
  - Identify barriers to adoption and provide solutions

# USDA and Agricultural Sustainability: **Ag Sector Engagement**



## ▶ Engagement

- ❖ Ag sector engagement critical to ensure acceptance, relevance, applicability, uptake
- ❖ Trusted partners
- ❖ Feedback loops
- ❖ Ongoing support and technical assistance critical to reduce risk (real, perceived) increase adoption
- ❖ Interpret opportunities (e.g. carbon offsets)

# USDA and Agricultural Sustainability: **Measuring & Monitoring Impacts**



- ▶ Impacts: environmental, economic, social (*triple-bottom line*)
  - ❖ Common, standardized, harmonized metrics, approaches important
    - ✓ Reduce duplication of efforts, redundant requirements on producers (audit fatigue)
  - ❖ Realistic monitoring & verification approaches
    - ✓ Science-based: aggregation, risk-based, randomized verification
    - ✓ High-tech solutions such as remote sensing, satellite monitoring, date/time stamped photos, new apps
  - ❖ Move away from single-focus impacts and towards integrated farm-scale systems based approaches & impact monitoring

## USDA and Agricultural Sustainability: **Value**



- ▶ Value: need to increase rewards, reduce risks
  - ❖ Demand side management (markets)
    - ✓ Voluntary and compliance markets have oversupply of offsets, low demand
    - ✓ Incentives to scale
  - ❖ Land-based offsets seen as high-risk, low-return
    - ✓ Undervalued, particularly given multiple ancillary associated benefits
    - ✓ Investors seeking better risk-return profiles
    - ✓ Lack of standardized metrics also cited

C-AGG's experience with market-based service approaches indicates system needs (data, verification) fall on spectrum that increases with financial return.



Approach sustainable agricultural systems same way: *spectrum*. Build opportunities along the spectrum: increased effort = increased benefit.

# Summary

Sustainable Agriculture can best be achieved through collaborative approaches that:

- ✓ reduce duplicative efforts;
- ✓ that are consistent, harmonized, and standardized; and
- ✓ create a spectrum of opportunities for the agricultural sector to achieve the triple-bottom line of Profit, People & Planet.





Thank you!

C-AGG

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